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ABSTRACT

This advisory for superintendents on the California Mentor Teacher Program provides background information, discusses issues in initial program planning, describes the state department of education's role and upcoming activities in program implementation, and gives information on funding for the program. The background section describes the purpose and legal basis of the program and gives an overview of how it will operate. Issues in initial program planning include: beginning immediately, working with appropriate groups, considering needs and roles mentors should fill, defining roles of selection committees, defining criteria for mentor nomination and selection, defining the process for assessment of candidate qualifications, determining mentor responsibilities, providing training for mentors, securing commitments from site administrators and teachers, setting reasonable expectations, and providing a forum for mentors to assist one another. The funding section discusses the stipends that will be given to mentors, funding for the second half of 1983-84, apportionment of funds to participating districts, allocation of funds for district administration of the program, availability of funds for 1984-85, and limitations on future participation of districts that do not participate during the initial year. A form to be returned by districts that intend to participate in the program is included. (DC)

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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Bill Honig
Superintendent
of Public Instruction

ED241473

November 1, 1983

TO: County and District Superintendents

FROM: Bill Honig
Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM

The California Mentor Teacher Program is an important provision in SB 813 designed to upgrade the quality of instruction. I believe that the program provides an exciting opportunity to reward excellence in teaching while implementing the reform mandate we have been given. You should view the program as an integral part of all other efforts aimed at improving the quality of instruction in the schools in your district.

The attached Program Advisory provides recommendations for program design as well as information on the availability of funding to support participation in the Mentor Teacher Program from January 1 through July 1, 1984. I urge school boards, administrators, and teachers to work together to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the Mentor Teacher Program.

BH:biw

Attachment

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BILL HONIG
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

CIL: 83/4-5

DATE: November 1, 1983

PROGRAM: Mentor Teacher Program

PROGRAM ADVISORY

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
721 CAPITOL MALL, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

CONTACT: Dr. Laura A. Wagner
Director, OSD
PHONE: (916) 322-5588

TO: County Superintendents
District Superintendents

FROM: James R. Smith, Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum and Instructional Leadership

Introduction

The Hughes-Hart Educational Reform Act of 1983 (SB 813) initiated an array of programs which hold great promise for improving California's schools. As Superintendent Bill Honig has stated, the Legislature, Governor, the public, and educators have joined together to:

- o provide significant funding increases for 1983-84 and call for important school quality reforms;
- o demonstrate a renewed concern for and support of academic excellence in the public schools; and
- o launch a coordinated, all-out effort to improve student performance, create an orderly learning environment in each of our schools, and provide educational leadership in our communities.

The Mentor Teacher Program offers a unique opportunity for school boards, administrators, and teachers to work together toward these goals.

This advisory has four purposes: first, to provide general background on the purposes of and opportunities presented by the Mentor Teacher Program; second, to offer suggestions to assist districts in initial planning of this program; third, to describe the Department's responsibilities and time lines for program implementation and, fourth, to request a letter of intent from districts to indicate interest in participating in the Mentor Teacher Program.

Background

The California Mentor Teacher Program (Article 4, commencing with Section 44490 of the Education Code) is intended to encourage retention of exemplary teachers and upgrading of skills of new and experienced teachers. This is to be accomplished by selecting "mentor teachers" and designating part of their time for

staff development with teacher trainees,* new and experienced teachers, and work on curriculum development. In return, these exemplary teachers will receive a $4,000 annual stipend. Mentors are selected on the basis of exemplary teaching. They are not required to hold administrative or other special credentials, and they are specifically prohibited from participating in the evaluation of other teachers.

Districts are not required to participate in either the Teacher Trainee Program or the Mentor Teacher Program. Both are implemented at district discretion. Districts may choose to implement the Mentor Program and not use teacher trainees. Districts wishing to implement a teacher trainee program must certify that there is a shortage of teachers in the subject matter area in which they intend to use trainees. However, districts which decide to employ teacher trainees are required to participate in the Mentor Program.

SB 813 enacted a number of provisions which were designed to offer teachers avenues of initiative and creativity which would encourage them to remain in classroom teaching. In characterizing the intent of the Mentor Teacher Program, the Legislature stated:

> 44490. The Legislature recognizes that the classroom is the locus of teaching reward and satisfaction. However, the Legislature finds that many potentially effective teachers leave the teaching profession because it does not offer them support, assistance, recognition, and career opportunities that they need.
>
> It is the intent of the Legislature in the enactment of this article to encourage teachers currently employed in the public school system to continue to pursue excellence within their profession, to provide incentives to teachers of demonstrated ability and expertise to remain in the public school system, and to restore the teaching profession to its position of primary importance within the structure of the state educational system.

*The Teacher Trainee Provisions (Section 25.5, Article 7.5, Section 44325) authorize the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to issue certificates to allow persons with baccalaureate degrees but no professional preparation in education to teach in secondary schools (grades 9-12, 7-8 if departmentalized). Teacher trainees are to have a professional development plan and be guided and trained by a mentor teacher. District models for professional development of trainees may include collaboration between the district and institutions of higher education. The CTC contact person is: Michael McKibbin, Consultant for Planning and Research, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1020 O Street, Room 222, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-3223.

SB 813 authorizes districts to designate up to 5 percent of their teachers as mentors. Undoubtedly, many more teachers could qualify and serve with distinction in the mentor role. Hopefully, this initial authorization for mentor teaching will be a first step in creating a variety of career ladders for classroom teachers. However, current funding levels restrict the number of mentors that can be selected.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN PLANNING MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS

The Mentor Teacher Program is a new opportunity and will require thoughtful planning in order to support educational improvement. The Department recommends that districts go through the following steps in planning a Mentor Teacher Program.

I. Planning and Program Design

1. Begin initial program planning immediately. SB 813 intends that mentor programs be initiated during the 1983-84 school year. Program regulations are not due to be adopted by the State Board of Education until January 1984. Districts should not wait until the regulations are released to begin program planning. As the rest of this advisory suggests, there are many issues that districts can consider which will not be dependent on the regulations for guidance.

2. Work with appropriate groups in planning the program. The success of a Mentor Teacher Program will depend in large measure on support and commitment from all those involved--teachers, governing boards, administrators, and other interested parties. Hence, district governing boards considering participating in the mentor program should convene these groups as soon as possible to establish a collaborative approach to program planning. One method of accomplishing this might be to establish an ad hoc committee to engage in initial discussions about local goals and design of a mentor program.

3. Consider needs and potential roles mentors should fill. Staff training activities and support are critical elements for fostering teacher and organizational change, and sustaining these changes in sufficient depth to impact student achievement. However, there is no single unitary system for providing staff development. Thus, how the mentor program is used in individual school districts will, and is expected to vary widely. District committees considering implementation of a mentor teacher program should examine how the program will relate to other initiatives requiring broad-based support from teachers and administrators (School Improvement, AB 551, Student Study Teams), and discuss alternative roles that mentors might fill. Section III of this Advisory (pages 6 - 8) outlines potential roles mentors might fill. Program planners should consider these alternatives in designing their mentor programs.

II. Determining Criteria and Selection Procedures

1. Define roles of selection committee. Education Code Section 44495 states that "The selection procedures for the designation of certificated classroom teachers as mentor teachers shall, at a mimimum, provide for the following:

"(a) A selection committee shall be established to nominate candidates for selection as mentor teachers. The majority of the committee shall be composed of certificated classroom teachers chosen to serve on the committee by other certificated classroom teachers. The remainder of the committee shall be composed of school administrators, chosen to serve on the committee by other school administrators. The governing board of a participating school district shall consider including parents, pupils, or other public representatives in the selection process, and may, at its option, include such persons.

"(b) Candidates for mentor teachers shall be nominated by the majority vote of the selection committee.

"(c) The selection process shall include provisions for classroom observation of candidates by administrators and classroom teachers employed by the district.

"(d) The final designation of any person as a mentor teacher shall be by action of the governing board of the school district from persons nominated pursuant to subdivision (b). The governing board may reject any nominations."

Governing boards may require any procedures for selection of committee members that are consistent with Section 44495. The final designation of mentor teachers is left to the governing board, which can also reject any nomination. The Department recommends that governing boards permit all eligible teachers to make application for mentor positions.

The role of the nominating committee for the mentors is an important one, and all participating groups will want to give careful thought to the selection of the nominating committee, the roles nominating committee members will play in assessment of mentor teacher candidates, and the type of commitment expected of nominating committee members. Another issue to consider is whether members of the nominating committee can apply to be mentor teachers. We recommend that they be allowed to do so.

Like the program as a whole, there is no single "best way" to constitute a selection or nominating committee. Whatever approach is taken should reflect the need to establish and build long-term support for the mentor program at the school level. Mentor teachers will need both principal and teacher trust and approval if their services are to be used well.

2. Carefully define criteria for mentor teacher nomination and assessment. Legislated selection provisions require that a nominee:

   a. Be a credentialed classroom teacher with permanent status (permanent status means tenure in those districts which grant tenure or three years experience in districts which do not grant tenure)

   b. Has substantial recent experience in classroom instruction

   c. Has demonstrated exemplary teaching ability, as indicated by, among other things, effective communication skills, subject matter knowledge, and mastery of a range of teaching strategies necessary to meet the needs of pupils in different context

   Districts should consider criteria such as the following in selecting mentors:

   o Demonstrates knowledge and commitment to subject matter

   - Subject matter expertise
   - Ability to convey enthusiasm for the subject to students

   o Demonstrates belief in student ability to succeed

   - Commitment to setting high expectations for students
   - Competence to teach at various student ability levels
   - Use of appropriate grading standards, including resistance to the practice of giving inflated grades
   - Willingness to give special attention to students requiring help
   - Success in fostering excellent student performance

   o Gives evidence of professional stature

   - Leadership, e.g., in organizing projects on his or her own initiative
   - Recognition by those in the same profession
   - Respect of his or her colleagues

3. Carefully define process for assessment of mentor candidate qualifications. The assessment of candidate qualifications is a critical process which will require careful definition for how candidates can be objectively assessed for nomination and/or selection. The legislated selection process includes provisions for classroom observation of candidates by administrators and classroom teachers employed by the district. Selection committees may wish to provide a few alternate nominees for consideration by the governing board. This would allow the governing board to avoid repeating the selection process if one or more mentor nominees is unable to serve.

III. Considering Potential Mentor Responsibilities

The Mentor Teacher Program should be closely linked to existing staff development and school improvement initiatives. For example, a mentor might function as a content or subject matter specialist across several schools. Another approach might be for the mentors to model new curriculum and instructional strategies for experienced teachers. Outlined below are some approaches which should be considered in defining the roles of mentor teachers. It is important to note that the roles described below are only examples of what mentors might do. In addition, not all mentors in a district need to be limited to a single role. For example, it might be appropriate and desirable for some of the district's mentors to be working in each of these roles.

a. Lead teacher or master teacher assigned to provide staff development for school staff. In this configuration, a mentor teacher would be assigned as a staff developer at a school site. A mentor might:

- Provide training, classroom observation, conferencing and coaching support for a group of teachers being retrained.

- Function as a content and methodology specialist at a school site for designated grade levels or content areas.

- Teach a regular sequence of courses, but provide opportunities for other teachers to observe in the mentor's classrooms, practice new skills, receive feedback and be supported through coaching in their own classrooms.

b. Mentor teacher as lead teacher or master teacher specifically assigned to retrain experienced teachers. As enrollment has declined and teachers have left the profession, existing staff have often been reassigned to shortage areas and many California

teachers are not now working in their primary subject area. A mentor assigned as a lead teacher might help existing staff upgrade their skills in their newly assigned subject areas.

c. Mentor as professional trainer of Teacher Trainees. Should a district decide to use teacher trainees, these persons will have baccaleaureate degrees, but no professional preparation in education. Mentors would be responsible for working with the district and the trainee to develop and implement a professional development plan for the trainee.

Trainees might function as interns in mentor teacher classrooms, or mentors might be available for part of the instructional day to discuss curricular, instructional, and management issues with these new classroom teachers. Given the responsibility of the mentors for oversight of the trainees, districts should protect the instructional time of mentors in their own classrooms and be realistic about the number of trainees with whom mentors can be expected to work effectively.

d. Mentor teachers as guides for new teachers. The first year of teaching is the most difficult, as research suggests that much of what teachers learn about teaching is learned "on the job." Hence, mentors could work with new teachers (that is, newly hired fully credentialed teachers--not "teacher trainees") to help upgrade their content knowledge, refine their instructional skills, and develop effective classroom management systems.

e. Mentor teacher as "fellow" in teacher training academy. Designated mentors might be grouped in a teaching academy where teachers with particular expertise would constitute a "demonstration" school. Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania provides such an example. This program provides a clinical teaching experience in a regular high school where teachers observe exemplary instructional activities, are able to practice and receive feedback on instructional skills, and receive continued support for using new concepts, skills, and processes in their own instruction.

f. Mentor teacher as "curriculum developer". Mentor teachers may be assigned to develop and install new curriculum materials. There is substantial evidence that the quality of textbooks and instructional materials has declined as students have increasing difficulty in reading materials "at grade level". In addition, there is frequently a mismatch between the classroom text, instructional content and standardized tests. Thus, mentors might be designated to work in the summer or in noninstructional time to develop curriculum and assist in classroom-level implementation.

IV. Supporting Mentor Teachers in Their New Roles

1. Provide training for mentors. Teaching adults is a significantly different process from teaching children. Adult motivations, habits, attitudes, and skills are different from those of children and need to be accommodated in the training activity. Most mentors will be working as advisors to the teaching process. Hence, if the mentor is to observe and work with teachers in classrooms, the mentor needs expertise in observation, conferencing, and clinical teaching support. If the mentor lacks expertise in these areas, training for the mentor needs to be provided.

2. Secure commitment from site administrators and teachers for work with the mentor. Mentor teachers are most likely to work with teachers at individual school sites. Observing in classrooms, sharing instructional strategies, modeling teaching ideas, and providing resources will require a strong degree of trust among mentors and site teachers and administrators. We recommend that site personnel make a specific commitment to the role of the mentor which realistically reflects what the mentor can do, prior to assignment to the site.

3. Set reasonable expectations about what mentors can accomplish. The organization of a mentor teacher's time should be dictated by the role he or she is expected to fulfill. The law states that not less than 60 percent of mentor's time shall be spent in direct instruction of pupils, but this doesn't preclude individuals from spending more or even all of the time in direct instruction of pupils, (e.g., the "training academy" notion).

   If mentor teachers are to improve instructional quality, their duties must be thoughtfully planned in light of specific local needs and goals for improving curriculum and instruction. We cannot overstate the need to be realistic about how much a single mentor teacher or group of mentors can accomplish. Prior experience with educational reform efforts suggests that many promising reforms fail because of unrealistic expectations that the reform can solve all problems.

4. Provide a forum for mentor teachers to assist one another. Mentor teachers are likely to observe other teachers' teaching and comment upon it. Thus, districts need to ensure both that mentors are trained to observe and make judgments about instruction, and that they are supported in this role as supervisors, not as evaluators. As participants in a new activity, mentors will need to be given opportunities where they can share and improve upon their mentoring skills. With this in mind, districts might want to provide a forum where mentors can share alternative approaches for working in particular settings and receive feedback from classroom teachers on their perceptions of the mentor's performance.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ROLE AND TIME LINES

The Department's role in implementation of the Mentor Teacher Program includes:

- Recommendation of Rules and Regulations to the California State Board of Education for approval in January 1984
- Annual determination of the number of teachers employed by each school district to allocate funds to participating school districts, including provisions for participation by districts which have five or fewer certificated employees
- Allocation of monies to participating school districts to support stipends, and reimburse the necessary costs of participation in the program
- Report to the Legislature by November 15, 1983 on Department of Education progress in implementing the law

Over the next few weeks and months, the Department will be engaged in the following activities to support implementation of the program:

- Dissemination of this advisory paper to the field, including requests for district letters of intent to participate in the program
- Review of draft Rules and Regulations by a field task force representing various constituencies interested in the Mentor Teacher Program, including teachers, administrators, teachers' association personnel, representatives of school boards, staff developers, representatives from institutions of higher education, business and industry, and researchers and practitioners in the implementation of teacher incentive plans
- Submission of regulations for State Board of Education review at its December meeting
- Preparation of a technical assistance handbook to describe various approaches districts might consider in designing local programs

LETTERS OF INTENT AND ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

Stipend funding. The legislation stipulates that participating districts shall provide each mentor with an annual stipend of no less than $4,000 over and above the regular salary to which the mentor is entitled. The $4,000 stipend is for a full-year of service as a mentor and AB 70 of 1983 made provision for this amount to be prorated for less than a full-year of service. In this first year of implementation, it is expected that mentors will serve only one half of the 1983-84 school year; thus the state will apportion $2,000 per 1983-84 mentor for stipend purposes.

Mentor stipends are not to be counted as salary or wages for purposes of calculating employer contribution rates or employee benefits under the State Teacher's Retirement System. The district governing board may designate certificated employees as mentor teachers and pay such persons stipends for a period not to exceed three consecutive school years. Upon completing three years as a mentor teacher, an individual may be reviewed and renominated. It should be noted that designating an individual as a mentor for three years does not obligate the state to provide stipend support for each of those years. State appropriations are made annually and allocations to districts are always subject to the availability of funds in any given year.

Current and future year funding. The Legislature has appropriated $10,400,000 for the Mentor Teacher Program for the second half of 1983-84. Full funding of 5 percent of the state's approximately 165,000 full-time certificated teachers would require $49,500,000 or $24,750,000 for half of a year. If the appropriated funds prove to be insufficient to cover all requests, then, the State Superintendent will decrease the percentage multiplier (initially specified at 5 percent if full funding were available) for all districts, in accordance with Education Code Section 44492.3. In this case all districts will be able to participate if they choose, but the maximum number of mentors in each district will be reduced (from 5 percent) to the percent designated by the Superintendent.

Apportionment of funds to participating districts. The Department has responsibility to annually review district funding applications and award monies to districts. Given the short time and the necessity to prorate existing participation, districts are being asked to submit the attached letter of intent to participate in the Mentor Teacher Program to the Office of Staff Development by December 15, 1983. While this does not commit the district to participate, it will provide the Department with a pool of potential participants from which to calculate the percentage multiplier for 1983-84. Districts not submitting the enclosed form by December 15, 1983 will not be considered for participation in 1983-84.

Use of funds. Section 26 of AB 70 requires that no more than one-third of the total state funding appropriated for the Mentor Teacher Program shall be used for necessary costs of participation beyond stipends. At least two-thirds of the funding is to be used for stipends. It is anticipated that each district's 1983-84 allocation of funds will reflect this 1/3 to 2/3 relationship so that each district will receive no more than $1,000 of administrative cost funding for each $2,000 of stipend funding.

Districts may choose to use or form into consortia or cooperatives to pool administrative costs of the mentor program. However, letters of intent to participate should be submitted by each district on an individual basis.

Availability of funds for 1984-85. Funding is contingent upon annual legislative appropriations. Current funds will support the Mentor Teacher Programs for the second half of the 1983-84 school year. Legislative augmentation (needed to "annualize" the funding) or even continuation of the current funding level after July 1, 1984 is not guaranteed.

Districts deciding not to participate in the program during 1983-84. Districts opting not to participate during 1983-84 will have an opportunity to participate in subsequent years only if additional funding is appropriated by the Legislature.

Contact person: Dr. Laura A. Wagner, Director
Office of Staff Development
California State Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-5588

Return by December 15, 1983 to:

Mentor Teacher Program
c/o Dr. Laura A. Wagner
Director
Office of Staff Development
California State Department
of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-5588

CALIFORNIA MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM

STATEMENT OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

The _____ school district or county office hereby indicates its intent to participate in the California Mentor Teacher Program during the 1983-84 school year.

In 1983-84, the district employs _____ certificated classroom teachers.

_____
Superintendent

_____
Address

_____
City, State, ZIP

_____
Phone

_____
Contact person if other than Superintendent